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| |  | | --- | | **History of the war in Bosnia**  **Historical Background**  http://www.balkandevelopment.org/_education/maps_bih.jpgThe former Yugoslavia consisted of six republics and two autonomous regions. Today Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, and Macedonia are independent nations. Serbia and Montenegro comprise the rump Yugoslavia.  **Bosnia-Herzegovina**  (prewar population 4.4 million): Bosnia has the most complex mix of religious traditions among the former Yugoslav republics: 44% Bosniaks (Muslims), 31% Bosnian Serb (Eastern Orthodox), and 17% Bosnian Croat (Roman Catholics). BosniaÃs Muslims are Slavs who converted to Islam in the 14th and 15th centuries after the Ottoman Empire conquered the region. From World War I until the end of the Cold War, Bosnia was part of the newly created country of Yugoslavia. Bosnia declared independence in March 1992.  **Serbia** (including Kosovo and Vojvodina) (prewar population 9,800,000): This republic is the largest and most populous. 66% are ethnic Serb of traditionally Eastern Orthodox religion. Until 1989, Serbia also had two œautonomous regions,” Kosovo and Vojvodina. Kosovo, bordering Albania, was the historic seat of a traditional Serbian kingdom and the site of the famous Battle of Kosovo in 1389, when the Serbs were conquered by Ottoman forces. Today KosovoÃs population is 90% ethnic Albanian, most of them Muslims. The Albanians are a pre-Slavic ethnic group speaking a distinct language unrelated to the various forms of Serbo-Croatian spoken throughout the former Yugoslavia.  **Croatia** (prewar population 4.8 million): In the second largest republic of former Yugoslavia, 79% of its residents were ethnic Croatian and 12% ethnic Serb, who were concentrated in the Krajina region, which closely follows CroatiaÃs border with Bosnia. Most Croatians are Roman Catholic. Croatia  declared independence from Yugoslavia in June 1991. During the summer of 1995, Croatian forces reclaimed the Krajina and drove more than 200,000 Serbs to exile in Serbia.  **Montenegro** (prewar population 584,000): This was the only republic not conquered by the Ottoman Empire or other outside powers. Mostly Serb Orthodox, Montenegro and Serbia now comprise what is left of Yugoslavia.  **Macedonia** (population 2,000,000): Macedonia is home to Macedonian Slavs (66%) who are mostly Orthodox Christians with some Muslims, Albanians (25%“35%) who are mostly Muslim, and a host of smaller minorities (Turks, Gypsies, Vlachs). Macedonia became the only former Yugoslav republic to make a nonviolent transition to independence in 1992. The Albanian population has long demanded some degree of cultural autonomy and, until the current crisis, most Macedonian Albanians have attempted to go about this by working within the existing power structures.  **Slovenia** (prewar population 1,892,000): The smallest in land mass but the wealthiest of the former republics, Slovenia is also the closest to western Europe, sharing a border with Austria. Its population is almost entirely composed of ethnic Slovenes, who have their own distinctive Slavic language and traditions. Slovenia declared its independence at the same time as Croatia, in June 1991.  **World War II to 1991**  During World War II, armed groups claiming allegiance to various ethnic factions fought both against each other and against the Nazi occupiers. By 1945, almost 1 million Yugoslavs had lost their lives, most of them at the hands of other Yugoslavs. Croatian fascists (Ustashe) were the most notorious for killing Serbs, Jews, Gypsies, Communists, and political opponents, but Serb Chetniks were also responsible for many mass killings. The Communist-led Partisans fought against both groups and were victorious (with Allied support) at the war's end. The Partisan leader, Josip Broz (Tito), ruled the country as a one-party socialist state.  Despite using repressive tactics and centralized control, Tito understood the importance of apportioning power evenly among the Yugoslav ethnicities. Under Communist rule, it was a serious crime to openly express ethnic aspirations of any kind.  After Tito's death in 1980, the nation slid into economic and political decline as a collective leadership began to squabble over power and the allocation of shrinking resources among the republics. With the final collapse of Communism in the 1980s, the restive population began seeking solutions to provide economic and political stability in a post- Cold War world. Unfortunately, the solution promoted by Serb and Croat extremists in this time of crisis was ethnic nationalism. Serbia's Communist Party leader, Slobodan Milosevic, began pandering to Serb nationalism, and quickly became the unchallenged ruler of Serbia. Through his control of the party apparatus and control of the media, he was able to become the most powerful figure in Yugoslavia, but despite his appeals to Serb national sentiment, his principal concern was with preserving his own control.  One of Milosevic's first acts was to change Serbia's constitution and void the autonomy of Kosovo. He began a campaign of repression against the ethnic Albanian Kosovars, making him a hero in the eyes of Serb nationalists throughout the former Yugoslavia.  Milosevic's attempts to seize control of the federal government and his repressive tactics in Kosovo drove the newly elected non-Communist governments of Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia to seek independence. The Yugoslav National Army (JNA) --with a predominantly Serb officers' corps --responded with brutal attacks supported by Serb nationalist militias in Croatia and Bosnia.  Ironically, when the war began in Croatia in 1991 and Bosnia in 1992, many Croats and Bosnians thought the Yugoslav National Army would protect them. They soon learned that the national army --the fourth largest in Europe --was clearly in the hands of Milosevic and being used to create Greater Serbia.  With Serb nationalists in control in Belgrade and Croat nationalists in power in Zagreb, Croatia voted to secede from Yugoslavia in 1991 to counter the plan for a Greater Serbia. Although Croat nationalists share responsibility for fanning ethnic tensions, it was Serbian forces who launched a savage military response to Croat independence, capturing and "cleansing" a third of Croatia, including eastern and western Slavonia, and the Krajina region adjacent to Bosnia.  In March 1992, Bosnia's Muslims and Croats, fearing the drive for a Greater Serbia, called for a referendum for Bosnian independence. Fierce propaganda from Serbia, depicting Muslims as extremist fundamentalists, caused many Bosnian Serbs to support Milosevic's plan for ethnic cleansing as a means of creating Greater Serbia. Since the Bosnian Serbs did not inhabit a single specific territory in Bosnia and lived alongside Muslim and Croat neighbors, the stage was set for war throughout the country.  On April 6, 1992, the Bosnian Serbs began their siege of Sarajevo. Muslim, Croat, and Serb residents opposed to a Greater Serbia were cut off from food, utilities, and communication. Through three long and cold winters, Sarajevans dodged sniper fire as they collected firewood and tried to get to their jobs. Food was scarce and the average weight loss per person was more than 30 pounds. More than 12,000 residents were killed, 1,500 of them children.  Throughout Bosnia, Bosnian Serb nationalists and the JNA began a systematic policy of "ethnic cleansing" (a polite term for genocide) to establish a "pure" Serb republic. They drove out all other ethnic groups by terrorizing and forcibly displacing non-Serbs through direct shelling and sniper attacks. Entire villages were destroyed. Thousands were expelled from their homes, held in detention camps, raped, tortured, deported, or summarily executed. Rape was a military tactic to destroy the bonds of families and communities.  Throughout the war, many Bosnians wanted to preserve a multiethnic state. But Serb and Croat nationalists sought to carve out Bosnian land to be annexed to the future Greater Serbia and Greater Croatia. Few people could have predicted that the war would last for almost four years, and with such barbarism. More than 200,000 Bosnians out of a population of 4.4 million were killed. Some 200,000 were injured, 50,000 of them children. Millions of people were deported or forced to flee their homes. Sixty percent of all houses in Bosnia, half of the schools, and a third of the hospitals were damaged or destroyed. Power plants, roads, water systems, bridges, and railways were ruined. Throughout these horrors, the international community failed to respond.  **Key Players in the Conflict**   **Serbia:** President Slobodan Milosevic's nationalist aims for a Greater Serbia started the machinery of war in 1986. Now based in Belgrade, he still controls the fourth largest army in Europe, the Yugoslav National Army (JNA). He has thus far evaded charges of war crimes and continues to exert considerable influence in the region. He was the Serb representative at Dayton and has since distanced himself from the Bosnian Serb leadership.  **Bosnian Serbs**: In 1991, prior to the war, Radovan Karadzic (a former psychiatrist) created a renegade army within Bosnia with the support of Milosevic in Belgrade. In 1992, under his leadership, Bosnian Serb nationalists began a systematic policy of "cleansing" large areas of Bosnia of non-Serbs. Both Karadzic and his military commander, Ratko Mladic, have been indicted for war crimes, including genocide, by a UN war crimes tribunal. Both remain at large and continue to wield power in Republika Srpska.  **Croatia**: President Franjo Tudjman, headquartered in Zagreb, leads the Croatian army and has close ties to the Bosnian Croat army, the HVO. The HVO lost significant territory to the Serb-controlled Yugoslav National Army, but supported Bosnian Croats as they captured swaths of territory in Herzegovina, the southwestern region of Bosnia around the city of Mostar where many Bosnian Croats reside. Tudjman continues to exert influence in the area controlled by the HVO, most of which remains "cleansed" of all Muslim and Serb inhabitants. Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Muslims formally allied in 1994 in an uneasy federation that was brokered by the United States.  **Bosnia:** President Alija Izetbegovic, head of the Muslim-dominated Party of Democratic Action (SDA), is based in Sarajevo. Bosnia was attacked by the Yugoslav National Army, Bosnian Serb nationalists, and Bosnian Croat nationalists.. The siege of Sarajevo lasted 43 months. An international arms embargo was in effect throughout the war, preventing the Bosnian government from obtaining the heavy artillery and arms that it needed to fight the more sophisticated arsenals of the Serbian and Croatian armies.  Izetbegovic is now chairman of the three-member Bosnian presidency, sharing power with Bosnian Croat Kresimir Zubak and Momcilo Krajisnik, a Bosnian Serb. Both Zubak and Krajisnik are opposed to a unified Bosnia with Sarajevo as the capital.  **The Role of the UN**  The failure of the UN to stop the killing in Bosnia seriously compromised its credibility as it neared its 50th anniversary in 1995. The UN already had UNPROFOR (United Nations Protection Force) troops in Sarajevo at the outset of war because it was their base of operation for the UN mission in Croatia. The UN hoped that their presence would discourage the spread of the conflict from Croatia to Bosnia. But when Sarajevo came under attack by Serb artillery in April 1992, the UN forces pulled out to avoid casualties, leaving behind only a small and lightly armed contingent of "peacekeepers" to discourage attacks by Serbian nationalists. There was clearly no peace to keep. As the situation deteriorated, creating a humanitarian nightmare, the UN struck a deal with the Serbs to control the Sarajevo airport. In reality, the Serbs only allowed the UN to use the airport under de facto Serb control. During the next three years the airport was the scene of hundreds of casualties. UN humanitarian flights were repeatedly fired upon and Bosnian civilians were killed by sniper fire as they attempted to escape across the tarmac. All aid flights and personnel transports had to be approved by Serb liaison officers stationed at the airport. In one of the most flagrant failures of the UN to provide protection, the Bosnian Deputy Prime Minister was shot point-blank by Serb nationalists in 1992 while riding in a UN armored personnel carrier at the airport.  UN personnel were well aware of massive violations of human rights and humanitarian law committed by the Bosnian Serb nationalists, yet did nothing. The world learned of the atrocities through the courageous efforts of print and TV journalists who visited Serb-run camps and reported on appalling conditions and treatment of Croat and Muslim detainees. Wrenching scenes were broadcast around the world showing hundreds of emaciated men and women behind barbed wire, their eyes hollow from hunger and despair. Although they never succeeded in protecting civilians from attack, the UN eventually took seriously its obligation to investigate war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity in the former Yugoslavia and established the International Criminal Tribunal.  **The International Criminal Tribunal** The International Criminal Tribunal, the first international war crimes court since the Nuremberg trials following World War II, was established by the UN Security Council in February 1993. Based in The Hague, it has announced indictments against 75 individuals --including Radovan Karadzic and General Ratko Mladic. There has been an enormous lack of will by the international community to seek out and arrest them. The 75 indictments name 54 Serbs, 18 Croats, and 3 Bosnian Muslims. In order for peace and reconstruction to continue in the region, it is crucial that the tribunal demonstrate that genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity cannot be committed with impunity. Establishing individual responsibility for crimes is essential to avoid the attribution of collective guilt.  **The Dayton Peace Accords**  The Dayton Peace Accords, signed on December 14, 1995, by Presidents Milosevic, Izetbegovic, and Tudjman, affirmed Sarajevo as the capital of Bosnia but carved Bosnia into two autonomous and ethnically based entities, separated by a demilitarized zone. The Serbs, in control of the Republika Srpska, were rewarded for their unbridled aggression and genocide with 49% of the territory of Bosnia. The Bosnians were granted the remaining 51% of the country, called the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, an uneasy alliance of Bosnian Muslims and Croats. Each entity has its own government, military, and police. A central government handles banking and foreign policy. Many Bosnians feel betrayed by their president and the world for the partition of their country.  **IFOR** Shortly after the accords were signed, the international Implementation Force (IFOR), a NATO-led peacekeeping force of 60,000 soldiers, arrived in Bosnia. Though heavy weapons were pulled back from front lines and the indiscriminate killing of civilians stopped, the external borders of Bosnia remain unprotected. Most non-Serbs have been cleansed from Serb-held areas and are not allowed to return to their homes. Many Serbs have left Federation-controlled territories.   IFOR was scheduled to leave Bosnia at the end of 1996. As a compromise, a new force with half the number of troops, SFOR (Stabilization Force) has been introduced instead.  **Bosnian Elections** Although elections were held in September to select a three-member presidency and a national parliament, most international observers claim that they were anything but free and fair. There was widespread voter fraud and intimidation, especially by Serb nationalists who bribed refugees to vote in areas where they never intended to live. The voter turnout as reported by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which monitored the elections, was close to 110%.  **Reconstruction** Bosnia's immediate needs are a repaired infrastructure, jobs, and the safe return of people to their homes. The World Bank estimates a need for $5 billion for the first three years of reconstruction. It has thus far only raised a small portion of that. But Bosnians are determined to rebuild their country and to build a future for their children.  **Here is a short chronology of what happened in Bosnia:**  **1992:**  Feb 29-March 1 - Bosnia's Muslims and Croats vote for independence in referendum boycotted by Serbs.  April 6 - European Union recognises Bosnia's independence. War breaks out and Serbs, under the leadership of Radovan Karadzic, lay siege to capital Sarajevo. They occupy 70 percent of the country, killing and persecuting Muslims and Croats to carve out a Serb Republic.  May - U.N. sanctions imposed on Serbia for backing rebel Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia.  **1993:**  Jan. - Bosnia peace efforts fail, war breaks out between Muslims and Croats, previously allied against Serbs.  April - Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde in eastern Bosnia are declared three of six U.N. "safe areas". The United Nations Protection Force UNPROFOR deploys troops and Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) attacks stop. But the town remains isolated and only a few humanitarian convoys reach it in the following two years. 1994:  March - U.S.-brokered agreement ends Muslim-Croat war and creates a Muslim-Croat federation.  **1995:**  March - Bosnian Serb President Radovan Karadzic orders that Srebrenica and Zepa be entirely cut off and aid convoys be stopped from reaching the towns.  July 9 - Karadzic issues a new order to conquer Srebrenica.  July 11 - Bosnian Serbs troops, under the command of General Ratko Mladic, capture the eastern enclave and U.N. "safe area" of Srebrenica, killing about 8,000 Muslim males in the following week. The U.N. war crimes tribunal in The Hague indicts Karadzic and Mladic for genocide for the siege of Sarajevo.  August - NATO starts air strikes against Bosnian Serb troops.  Nov. 21 - Following NATO air strikes against Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Muslim President Alija Izetbegovic, Croatian President Franjo Tudjman and Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic agree to a U.S.-brokered peace deal in Dayton, Ohio.  Dec. 14 - The three leaders sign the Dayton peace accords in Paris, paving the way for the arrival of a 66,000-strong NATO peacekeeping Implementation Force (IFOR) in Bosnia. The international community establishes a permanent presence in the country through the office of an international peace overseer.  **1996:**  July - West forces Karadzic to quit as Bosnian Serb president.  September - Nationalist parties win first post-war election, confirming Bosnia's ethnic division.  **1997:**  -- Having lost power, Karadzic goes underground.  **2002:**  Feb. 12 - Former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic goes on trial charged with 66 counts of genocide and war crimes in Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo.  **2003:**  Dec. - Ex-NATO commander tells the court Milosevic knew Bosnian Serbs planned to massacre Muslims in Bosnia in 1995. 2004:  June 11 - In a belated abandonment of its endless denials and under strong international pressure, the Bosnian Serb government make a landmark admission -- that Serbs indeed massacred thousands of Muslims at in Srebrenica, on Karadzic's orders.  **2006:**  March 11 - Milosevic is found dead in his cell in The Hague.  **2008:**  July 21 - Bosnian Serb wartime president Radovan Karadzic, one of the world's most wanted men for planning and ordering genocide, is arrested. | |  |

**Class Debate**

**C8 and C10**

**Is it right for the victors of a war to try the losers for crimes committed during that war? Are war crimes tribunals anything more than victors’ justice?**